

Fall Protection Tips

In 2006, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that fatal work injuries involving falls increased 5 percent in 2006 after a sharp decrease in 2005. The 809 fatal falls in 2006 was the third highest total since 1992, when the fatality census began. Fatal falls from roofs increased from 160 fatalities in 2005 to 184 in 2006, a rise of 15 percent. Falls from ladders and roofs still account for the majority of falls. Identifying fall hazards and deciding how best to protect workers is the first step in reducing or eliminating fall hazards. Occupational fatalities caused by falls remain a serious public health problem. The US Department of Labor (DOL) lists falls as one of the leading causes of traumatic occupational death, accounting for eight percent of all occupational fatalities from trauma. Any time a worker is at a height of four feet or more, the worker is at risk and needs to be protected. Fall protection must be provided at four feet in general industry, five feet in maritime and six feet in construction. However, regardless of the fall distance, fall protection must be provided when working over dangerous equipment and machinery.

- Identify all potential tripping and fall hazards before work starts
- Look for fall hazards such as unprotected floor openings/edges, shafts, skylights, stairwells, and roof openings/edges.
- Inspect fall protection equipment for defects before use.
- Select, wear, and use fall protection equipment appropriate for the task.
- Secure and stabilize all ladders before climbing on them.
- Never stand on the top rung/step of a ladder.
- Use handrails when you go up or down stairs.
- Practice good housekeeping. Keep cords, welding leads and hoses out of walkways or adjacent work areas.

